



# AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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## LIBRARY SERVICE TO LABOR NEWSLETTER \*

Dorothy Bendix, Chairman  
Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Groups  
Detroit Public Library, Detroit 2, Mich.

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Sarah E. Large, Denver P.L.	Labor Education Service
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For the AFL - John D. Connors, Director, Workers Education Bureau.

For the CIO - George T. Guernsey, Associate Director of Education.

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## LOVE'S LABOR FOUND

By Helen F. Hirson, Assistant,  
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and Community Services  
Boston Public Library

Can library service to labor get publicity? A full page feature article, They Read While They Labor, in the Boston Sunday Post; a week later, a signed article, Boston Library Services Workingman with Books, and a large picture in the Christian Science Monitor, Saturday, September 1, (local and Pacific edition); and a full page, From Library to Worker, in the rotogravure section (six pictures) of the Boston Sunday Globe; these three articles are concrete evidence in the affirmative.

The Boston Public Library's service to trade unions received prominent coverage in all the Boston newspapers, in union publications, and additional clippings are coming in daily from cities near and far. What is the explanation of this successful publicity? Co-operation is the answer. Foremost is the co-operation of several departments of the Library. The initiative came from the enthusiasm of Mr. Thomas J. Manning, in charge of the Exhibits Office, who decided to devote the four new, well-lighted display cases in the Main Lobby of the Central Library to a labor exhibit during the month of September.

Equally important is the Library's friendly relationship with union officers and members. Co-operation means not only the Library's willingness to extend its services to trade unions, but also the Library's efforts to find out how and what services the unions wish. Much of the success of our exhibit, its title and theme, came from the union officers themselves; and it was the title and the theme that appealed to the press so that it gave space generously. Prior to the exhibit,

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when Mr. Francis Lavigne, Executive Director, Committee on Education of the Massachusetts Federation of Labor, was asked for ideas on the exhibit, he mentioned labor's fight against inflation and labor's concern about industrial accidents. A week later when Mr. Stephen E. McCloskey, AFL liaison officer, returned from the summer session at the Hudson Shore Labor School, full of ideas and energy, Mr. Lavigne suggested that Mr. McCloskey get in touch with the Boston Public Library. After a few meetings with Mr. McCloskey and Mr. Manning - some in the Library and some in Mr. McCloskey's office - detailed plans were drawn up to carry out Mr. McCloskey's theme, Labor's Role in the Community, with three cases using his titles. One unit entitled The Union Program with the Social Services described the activities of the AFL Consultant and the CIO Consultant of the United Community Services of Metropolitan Boston, which includes counseling classes, all day institutes, come-and-see tours, official union leaflets, and representation on boards of social agencies.

Another case, The Union Program on Anti-Inflation, charted the organizational plan for action from the Executive Board to four committees - Publicity, Community Contacts, Communications, and Legislation - indicating their specific tasks such as making contacts with churches, womens' clubs, civic clubs, congressmen, and Legislative committees. Similarly, The Union Program on Current Trends depicted the action for low cost housing, veterans housing, rent-control, fair employment practices, civil rights, and the reduction of industrial accidents. At Mr. Manning's suggestion, the fourth case, The Union Program with the Boston Public Library, illustrated the Library's services to trade unions, such as book deposits to factories, union headquarters, and union meetings; book displays at labor institutes and conferences; special labor booklists; information and reference service. There is also an acknowledgement of the substantial check presented to the Library by the Northern New England District of the I.L.G.W.U. toward the purchase of the union film, With These Hands.

The materials for the exhibit were gathered with the assistance of the Statistical Department, the Open Shelf Department, and the Book Selection Department of the Division of Home Reading Services. The staff members of the Statistical Department were most helpful in assembling books and pamphlets for the exhibit and the Book Selection Department arranged with one of the local bookstores for new copies of books in colorful jackets. Again, union officers contributed; Mr. Berry Aronson, CIO Consultant and Mr. McCloskey, AFL Consultant for the United Community Services, furnished photographs and illustrative material; and they, as well as Mr. Julius Bernstein, Executive Director, Boston Labor Committee to Combat Intolerance, supplied generous amounts of leaflets, so that the exhibit was augmented by two additional cases in the vestibule of the Library. Duplicate copies of the leaflets were sent to the Statistical Department, the Open Shelf Department, and to the thirty branch libraries for circulation.

At the same time, a booklist with the same title as the exhibit, Labor's Role in the Community, was prepared. Mr. Bernstein lent us a modern designed "cut" for the cover. The list was a six-paged, printed folder with forty annotated titles classified under the same headings as were used in the exhibit, plus Recent Books on Labor. These lists were distributed at the Information Desk, the Statistical Department, and the Open Shelf Department. Copies of the booklist will be gladly sent upon request.

A month before the exhibit opened, Miss Elizabeth B. Boudreau, who as Chief of the Information Office handles publicity for the Library, invited me to write the lead article for the Library's bulletin, The B.P.L. News, describing the

exhibit and the Library's service to trade unions. In addition she succeeded in obtaining a magazine feature story in one Boston newspaper and a full page in the rotogravure section of another. Permission was received from the presidents of four factories and from three union headquarters for the newspaper photographers to take pictures. When the Labor reporter of the Christian Science Monitor read the feature article, Labor's Role in the Community Exhibit, in the B.P.L. News, he telephoned to ask for an article and picture for the Saturday preceding Labor Day.

The exhibit opened on August 31 with spot announcements on nine Boston radio stations on the six o'clock news broadcasts on the evening of August 30 and on the eleven o'clock news broadcasts on the morning of August 31. Followed by noticeable newspaper publicity on the Labor Day week-end, publicity was no longer an effort. From then on it "snowballed" on its own momentum. Follow-up releases describing the exhibit were sent to sixty news outlets, including twenty local union publications.

Television, too, found the service to labor worthy of news. Miss Boudreau arranged for a fifteen minute program at noon, at which time I was interviewed by Bill Hahn of Station WNAC. Moreover, three different still pictures were used on three TV newscasts.

In addition to the Library's publicity program, union officers sent releases to the stewards of the American Federation of Radio Artists of all Boston stations, so that there were daily announcements for a two week period. Two still pictures of the exhibit were also televised through the interest of the unions. At the last Boston Central Labor Union meeting after an introduction by Mr. Herman Koster, Chairman of the Educational Committee, I spoke on the exhibit and invited the delegates and their friends to visit the Library.

Although it is too early for a final evaluation of the significance of the exhibit and the wide publicity it received from the point of view of the Library, the unions, and the community, there is no doubt that the unions are gratified. Many union officers have come to the Library and are still coming. Mr. Henry J. Brides, President of the Massachusetts Federation of Labor, and Mr. J. William Belanger, President of Massachusetts CIO, came on the second day of the exhibit and praised it highly. Mr. Julius Bernstein exclaimed, "This exhibit is the best thing that has 'hit' this town!" One union shop wrote, "Due to recent publicity both in the Boston papers and in our company paper, there has been an increased use of the library."

Other immediate results of the publicity are the following:

1. At the request of the Worcester Public Library, Mr. McCloskey, the AFL Liaison Officer, is arranging a similar exhibit.
2. Pictures and information were sent upon request to a publisher in Washington for use in a few monthly journals of International Unions affiliated with the A.F.L.
3. At the request of the A.L.E.S. we mailed a copy of the September B.P.L. News, which has the article on the exhibit.
4. Miss Arne Ramsay Somers, Special Consultant, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, has asked for pictures and material describing the exhibit and information on the Library's service to trade unions. Her letter ended, "May I take this opportunity to congratulate you and your Institution on what seems to me a valuable contribution to community relationships."

We believe that library service to labor should stimulate the non-labor people of the community to think about union principles and activities. We, too, should like to think that our exhibit is a forward step toward greater knowledge and a better understanding of Labor's Role in the Community.

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LABOR LOOKS AT THE PUBLIC LIBRARY \*

by  
Bill Kemsley, Education Director  
Michigan CIO Council

Some time ago I was asked to put down a few ideas on how libraries might better cooperate with the education programs of the union movement.

It is apparent that we have much in common. Basically we are both stimulating people to give more thought to the complex problems that confront them in today's chaotic times.

It is indeed pleasing to see more librarians becoming interested in labor's problems and realizing that our problems are the nation's problems and the nation's problems are ours. A nation without a free union movement is a nation under a dictator's yoke.

Organized labor is a growing force in every American community. Union education is becoming a more important phase of union activity as union leaders are being faced with more complex problems.

That librarians should be interested in our education programs is only right and logical. That they should want to serve us as an integral group in the community is to be expected. That they are approaching us with proffers of help is commendable. And that they are asking us just how to best proffer that help is indeed laudatory and deserving of a well considered answer.

I believe that it is a correct assumption that very few union leaders and for that matter, few union education directors fully realize the services that are available from their public library. Nor do many know that they have friends in the library who are interested in their problems and anxious to be of service to them.

First, I believe that all librarians should designate some person on their staff to act as Labor Librarian. This person should be selected with some degree of care. Preferably he, (in the generic sense) should be a union member himself. At least he should have some interest in and understanding of the unionist and his problems. And he should have the ability to work with people.

Second, a separate Labor Department or Section, or, in small libraries, a Labor Shelf should be set up. Much care should be given to the selection of books, that go into this section. To indicate what I mean, let me say that no self-respecting union member would be seen with some of the books I have seen in various collections that may have been loaned to union education institutes and on lists recommended by certain libraries.



In making these selections, it is wise to secure lists of suggested books from such sources as the National CIO, the Workers Education Bureau of the AFOFL, the national education departments of the various unions in your community, the education departments of State CIO Council and State Federation. One important reason for setting up such a section of good labor books is to first prove to the unionist that your interest in him and his problems is an honest and basic one. Remember that he has learned through bitter experience to question the motives of many of those who call themselves his friends.

The Labor Librarian should get to know those who are active in the union education program in his community and area. As well, drop into the various union offices (it's usually best to first make an appointment) and get acquainted with the local union officers. Ask to speak at their union meetings, but always try to do this through the education committee of the local or county council. And when you begin to see the union at work don't try to run it for the boys. They may be inexperienced and seem to be cumbersome in their ways, but they do get things done.

Perhaps you might take a deposit of books to the union meetings with you. Make it a broad selection for our reading tastes are as broad as any other group's. You might arrange to loan out books at one meeting to be picked up at the next.

Ask to put up a display on your library's services at the union hall. Provide posters whenever they are available. Never miss the chance to tell the story of your library and its aims to all union groups. In some communities the Labor Librarian is a regular feature at the union meeting and plugs a new book at each session.

You might try to get the union education committee to start up a book discussion club. But don't forget that these people work hard and are tired. They've already put in 8 or 10 hours of hard work and their union and education work is done on their own time.

Ask to be placed on the mailing lists of their union papers and other periodicals. And see that this literature is displayed in the Labor section of your library.

What about using your library as a place in which to advertise the union radio programs that can be heard in your vicinity? Or a poster pushing the next education conference or picnic or rally that the union holds? A good way to prove your interest in the union is to plan, with union representatives, a good Labor Day display to be put up in your library during the Labor Day week. And bring all of these things to the attention of the union. You'll be pleasantly surprised at the reaction.

If you have reference facilities available bring them to the attention of the union officers. Perhaps the union would like to take a survey of their membership on some important topic or phase of union activity, or perhaps they need certain statistics in order to know how best to approach a vital problem. They probably have little idea just how to go about collecting this information. Your reference department might be able to furnish invaluable assistance and advice in these matters.

Movies are an "open sesame" that often bring the desired results. Talk them over with the union education committee and suggest a 15 minute or half hour discussion afterward. But, again, select them with care for we do get tired of the company propaganda that so often gets spewed onto film.

If your library usually has a movie program that is open to the public, bring it to the attention of the unions. Invite them to participate. And have you thought about a good union picture to show at one of the sessions? Lists are available from the sources mentioned above.

Many of our county councils and larger locals have weekly radio programs. There are presently 15 such programs in Michigan. Get acquainted with the radio commentator and now and then give him a short news item about your services. He'll do his best to work it into his program and love you for your efforts. Too, don't forget the labor weekly papers in your area. Keep them supplied with short news items when you have them.

Many of our unions have purchased book gifts for the libraries in their communities. It might be good if you approached the unions in your town to do the same. But be sure that you're talking about a labor book when you do.

Maybe you can plan an "open house" for union members, working, of course, with the union education committees in planning it. Can you serve coffee and doughnuts later and just sit around in a gab-fest with the unionists? Or maybe the next meeting of the union education committee might be held at the library.

In short, the limit of the ways in which you can work with the unions is only the limit of your imagination and energy. And the contributions you make will win you the most loyal friends in the community. You'll enjoy our company, too, and will find that we're generally serious, hardworking people.

Finally, if you want some real help in solving the many problems that you are confronted with you might begin now to agitate for union representation on the Library Board. There's really no reason why we shouldn't have it, is there?

Many of us realize that you and we have a stake in the future. You see, we know that the forces which burned the books in Hitler's Germany were the same forces that imprisoned and killed the union leaders. And we know, too, that the forces that would emasculate the libraries in America and set up thought-control are the same forces that would break the unions if they had the chance.

When you begin to work officially with the unions in your town you'll be subjected to various kinds of pressure. It is inevitable. But you'll be showing us that you really believe in the democratic processes and we'll be solidly on your side. It'll be fun. Best of luck.

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#### NEWS OF GENERAL INTEREST

##### From Long Beach, Calif.

We used films at our union convention in Long Beach, California, and were able to get some good ones from the Long Beach Public Library. It had such films as Brotherhood of Man, Songs of Friendship, Valley of the Tennessee, What Is a Co-op, and several other useful films.

More important than this was the contact with the film librarian. We got into a good discussion of labor films and which ones were available. The library was interested in getting some labor films but knew practically nothing about the labor film field. I was able to give them some suggestions and descriptions of union films

available. They were going to write for preview copies of some of the labor films and, I believe, the Library will purchase one or two additional films.

By the way, the film librarian was overjoyed that a union head thought of using some of their films during the union convention.

Joe Glazer, Education Director  
United Rubber, Cork, Linoleum and  
Plastic Workers of America, CIO

From Michigan

On December 1 and 2 a Michigan CIO state-wide Education Conference was held at the Kellogg Center for Continuing Education, Michigan State College, East Lansing. Participating in a panel on public materials and services available for workers' education were Loleta Fyan, Michigan State Librarian and President of the American Librarian Association, and Otto Yntema, Director of Extension at Western Michigan College of Education and a trustee of the Kalamazoo Public Library. Forrest Alter, First Assistant, Audio-Visual Department, Detroit Public Library, was a member of a panel on using films and film strips. A display of books on labor, publicity and legislation was set up at the conference by Eudocia Stratton, Head of the Extension Division of the Michigan State Library.

Forrest Alter, First Assistant  
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Detroit Public Library

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